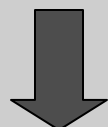


THE PLACER

A Voice of History

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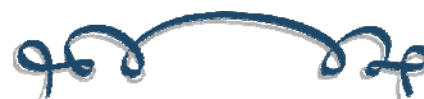
Administrator's Notes

Melanie Barton

April 19th–25th was National Volunteer Week. Our annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner which is usually held during this week will be on May 17th this year. On this occasion we will thank all of the people who volunteer their time supporting Placer County Museums. In addition to our volunteers, many people living in Placer County volunteer for activities that benefit the historic community. A wonderful example of that was the Rotarians at Work Day on April 25th when 40–50 people worked on projects at the Bernhard Museum Complex. They painted the picket fence after spending the preceding two weekends replacing pickets, power washing, and priming. They also added a fresh coat of green paint to the benches and planted a vegetable garden that will be used for interpretation. Many others volunteer behind the scenes on Historical Society boards, as members of the Historical Organizations Committee, the Historical Advisory Board, and event planning and coordination. To all of you who give willingly of your time and energy, THANK YOU! It is because of your efforts that our region has preserved our historic sites

and continues to celebrate our rich history.

Recently, I participated in a Cultural & Heritage Tourism Workshop for this region. One hundred people convened to discuss our regions assets and to look at ways to encourage tourism. In addition to engaging history, we also have fine shopping, dining, art, wine, and recreation that will delight most visitors to this area. We have many events already in place such as The Heritage Trail, Wine Tours, Art Walks, Country Christmas, and the Gold Country Fair which draw visitors to Placer County. Many of our local businesses are becoming very creative in their marketing efforts. For example, Bootleggers Restaurant is offering a specially prepared lunch followed by docent lead tours of local museums. They also have put together specialty picnic baskets that can be ordered in advance to take on wine, art or museum tours. It is this kind of creativity that sets our community apart. Together we can make Placer County a destination for visitors which give us all the opportunity to share our unique culture and heritage.♣



Works Progress Administration

Ralph Gibson

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was established by executive order as one of President Roosevelt's New Deal programs in 1935. In 1939, it became part of the Federal Works Agency; the name was changed to "Works Project Administration" and Congress appropriated \$4.88 billion to the program.

In Placer County, several buildings and beautification projects were funded entirely or in part by the WPA. A June 24, 1939 article in the *Placer Herald* noted several WPA projects in the region such as the City Hall and Firehouse building; thousands of feet of rock wall throughout town; the sidewalk, wall, and landscaping work at the Veteran's Memorial Hall; Placer Junior College (now Placer High School); a new addition to the Auburn Grammar School; the Placer Union High School Gymnasium; the new Auburn Fairgrounds; and work at the Auburn Ski Club grounds in Cisco.

Another WPA building in Placer County was the Colfax Grammar School. Construction for the school began in 1937 and was completed in 1939. Colfax Grammar School opened for classes in September of 1940. The school moved out

of the building in 1986, but it continues to thrive today as a Community Center.



Former Colfax
Elementary School

Other notable WPA projects in Placer County include a sewage treatment plant in Auburn and sidewalks in Roseville. In fact, the WPA stamp still graces some sidewalks in Roseville.

The WPA always left a marker or a stamp in fresh concrete to identify its projects. This wasn't done for pride of work alone, but was an effective marketing tool. People saw "WPA" as they moved through their daily lives and it assured them that the program had a measurable effect on their community. Newspaper columns across the country often reported favorably on the WPA projects in their towns.

On May 15, 1937, the *Placer Herald* noted:

"Trustees of the Placer Union High School and Junior College District have accepted the new \$85,000 gymnasium,

completed under direction of W.E. Coffman, architect, by J.C. Meyers, contractor...

"...The new edifice is declared by experts to be the finest of its type west of Berkeley, where the University of California has its multi-million dollar plant."

For the Placer County Museums, our favorite WPA building is the one that houses the Gold Country Museum in the Gold Country Fairgrounds. This building was completed in 1940 and became the first Placer County Museum in 1948.

The WPA officially ended on June 30, 1943. It had employed over 8.5 million people and spent more than \$11 billion. Overall, the WPA built 651,087 miles of highways, roads and streets; constructed, repaired or improved 124,031 bridges, 125,110 public buildings, 8,192 parks, and 853 airport landing fields.

The California State Historical Society and the University of California at Berkeley have collaborated on the creation of an online database of New Deal projects in California. You can visit the website to learn about documented New Deal sites in our state. Thus far, only one Placer County site has been registered (Colfax

Elementary School), but more will be posted in the coming months.

The web address is:

<http://livingnewdeal.berkeley.edu/>

As a side note, some WPA projects in Placer County were left out of this article because they will fit much better in upcoming topics for our New Deal theme in this year's *The Placer*.



Rock Wall at Veteran's Memorial Hall



Placer High School



Museums Intelligence

Placer County Museums News

Ralph Gibson

In April this year we have had hail, snow, hard rain, cold rain, and record-breaking heat. I think our fourth month is suffering from multiple personality disorder. I've never been happier to see May. May is going to be a busy month, which means it will fly by very fast. We have two community education programs, our Volunteer Appreciation Potluck Dinner, and Living History. Blink twice and it will be June.

In the museums the big news is the new exhibit, *Unveiled*. This exhibit was installed in all three of our Auburn museums and officially opened on April 30th. At the Placer County Museum, wedding dresses from 1917 through the 1940s are on display; at the Bernhard Museum are wedding dresses from the 1880s through the turn of the 20th century; and our oldest wedding dress from 1867 is on exhibit in the Gold Country Museum's Gold Rush Theatre. If you haven't already, please make a point to visit the museums to see the wonderful wedding dresses from our collection.

The Placer County Museums blog is steadily gaining viewership. We post information on exhibits and Community Education Programs, and special behind the scenes posts from the Exhibit Shop and our Collections Management Facility. If you haven't already, please check it out at:

<http://www.placercountymuseums.blogspot.com>

Community Education Program: *A Screening of the Silent Film "Gold Rush"*

In 1925, Charlie Chaplin wrote, directed, and starred in the landmark silent film: *Gold Rush*. The film focuses on his comedic character, "Little Tramp", during Alaska's Klondike Gold Rush of 1896. Part of the film was shot near present day Sugar Bowl Ski Resort in Placer County. This classic piece of cinema will be shown in the Placer County Museum on Friday, May 8th at 7:00 p.m. The film has a running time of about 90 minutes. Admission to this Placer County Museums Community Education Program is FREE!

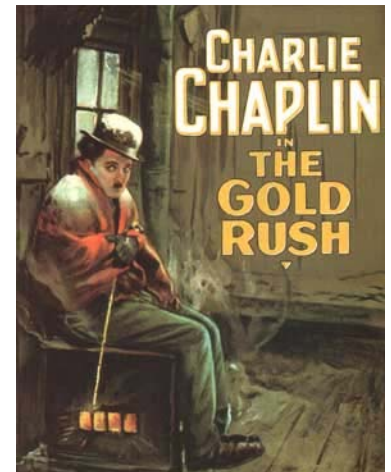
Gold Rush is one of four films featured in the Placer County Museum exhibit, *History on the Go, The Silver Screen Edition*. Because seating is limited, reservations are required.

To reserve your seat, or for more information, please call 530-889-6500.

Community Education Program: *Jump into Summer ~ 19th Century Kids Games*

It's summer! Help us kick off our favorite season with a fun romp through history! Join us at the Bernhard Museum for the next Community Education Program: *Jump into Summer ~ 19th Century Kids Games*. Bring your family on Saturday, June 27th anytime between 12:00 and 3:00. We will have period games, Living History crafts, kid-friendly tours of the Bernhard House, and hand-cranked ice cream. Take a step back in time with your whole family for a taste of yesteryear's summertime fun! This program is FREE! The Bernhard Museum is located at 291 Auburn-Folsom Road in Auburn.

For more information, please call 530-889-6500.



Placer County Historical Society News

President's Message

*Michael Otten,
President*

It's party time. Put on your walking shoes and join us Thursday, June 11, to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Auburn Public Library, the first Carnegie Library in Placer County.

The Placer County Historical Society, Friends of Auburn Library and the Old Library Art Studios will have a centennial celebration from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Library, 175 Almond St., as part of the Auburn Art Walk. The formal ceremony in the garden area behind the library begins at 7 p.m. with Mayor Mike Holmes, Placer County Supervisor Jim Holmes, Mark Parker, director of Library Services for Placer County, and myself as president of the PCHS. We want to honor all those who worked there, particularly at the city or county library. The library is now the Old Library Art Studios.

The program will feature the unveiling of a new "Ceramic Book Sculpture" that is being fashioned by seven OLAS artists in the backyard garden that was created last year by Project Auburn. If you hurry you can add a personalized ceramic book for \$50. Call artist Gerda Francesca right away (530-887-8216) as most books are already taken. We are planning a wine tasting, refreshments, music and a special historical display.

The Auburn Library was formally dedicated on May 26, 1909. Steel magnate Andrew Carnegie's basic requirements for a library were that the land for the building be furnished and that the community

commit to a 10 % of the grant size) annual contribution. The Auburn City Trustees levied a special two-mill property tax and purchased a lot in Almond Heights for \$400 from State Senator William Lardner, who also was in real estate and later built a couple of homes just above the library.

Auburn dentist Dr. John C. Hawver, best known for his historical findings in the American River Canyon caves that now bear his name had proposed to the Library Trustees that they use the first floor for a museum. The minutes note that they deferred action and the next thing we know the city trustees decide it would be better used for city offices and a meeting place for them.

The City Board of Trustees (headed by a president), later to be known as the City Council (headed by a mayor), met on the ground floor level of the library from 1909 until 1937 when through a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project a new City Hall was built on High Street. When the trustees and the city offices moved out, the county's first library moved into the lower floor that created a seemingly odd segregated system of library usage.

If you lived in the city you had to use and check out books from the upstairs library and if you lived outside the Auburn City Limits you were relegated to the downstairs. The building is still owned by the City of Auburn and is leased to Placer County Arts which subleases to a group of artists for Art Studios, thus the current name. I am hoping that the Auburn Carnegie centennial will serve as an impetus for some restoration work and its rightful place on the National Register of Historic Places along with the Lincoln and Roseville Carnegies.

Of course, Auburn's library history goes back long before the Carnegie Library. The important aspect is above the door: "FREE TO ALL."

The libraries abandoned the building in 1968 upon the merger of the City and County Library. The current Auburn Library opened in February 1973.

Please let me know if you would like to work a two-hour hosting shift at the school house museum in City Hall during the second annual Heritage Trail museum tour the weekend of Aug. 8-9. Also, let me know if you are interested in joining us for a summer field trip. Finally, I would like to note the passage of former PCHS secretary Bob Bishop on April 20.♠

--Michael Otten, otten@ssctv.net

Placer County Historical Society Dinner Meeting

Addah Owens, Vice President

When: June 4, 2009

Time: 6:30 Dinner, 7:30 Program

Where: Veteran's Memorial Hall, 100 East St., Auburn, CA

Cost: \$14 per person

Menu: BBQ Chicken and Beef, Tom's Special Beans, Potato Salad, Rolls, and Dessert.

Mail Check to: PCHS, c/o Betty Samson, 8780 Baxter Grade Road, Auburn, CA 95603.

Program: Tevis Cup veteran Hal Hall and State Parks Superintendent Mike Lynch will present the program which will include a film on the history, development and use of the Western States Trail *They Crossed the Mountains – A History of the Western States Trail*. Hal is the executive producer of the film, and former President of PCHS.

A copy of the film will be on sale before and after the program.♦

Placer County Historical Organizations

Colfax Area Historical Society
Ed & Nilda Duffek
(530) 305-3209
www.colfaxhistory.org

Donner Summit Historical Society
Margie Powell, (530) 432-4015

Foresthill Divide Historical Society
Sandy Simester,
(530) 367-3535
www.foresthillhistory.org

Friends of Griffith Quarry
Doug Brown, (916) 663-1837

Fruitvale School Hall
Community Association
Nancy Peterson,
(916) 434-1727

Golden Drift Historical Society
Doug Ferrier, (530) 389-2617

Historical Advisory Board
Tracy Falk, (530) 889-6500

Joss House Museum and
Chinese History Center
Richard Yue (530) 346-7121

Lincoln Highway Association
Norman Root, (916) 483-8669
www.lincolnhwy.org

Loomis Basin Historical Society
Dot Shiro, (916) 663-3892
www.ppgn.com

Lincoln Archives Museum
Shirley Russell, (916) 645-3470

Newcastle Portuguese Hall
Association
Aileen Gage, (530) 885-9113

Old Town Auburn Preservation Society
Donna Howell, (530) 885-2891

Placer County Genealogical Society
Alice Bothello, (530) 885-2216
www.pcgene.com

Placer County Historical Society
Michael Otten, (530) 888-7837
www.placercountyhistoricalsociety.org

Placer County Museums Docent Guild
Joy Williams, (530) 823-3553

Rocklin Historical Society
Barbara Chapman,
(916) 415-0153
www.rocklinhistory.org

Roseville Historical Society
Michael Bryant, (916) 773-1520
www.rosevillehistorical.org

Placer County Historical Society Officers 2009-2010

Elected at the Annual Meeting in April

President:	Michael Otten
1st Vice President:	George Lay
2nd Vice President:	Addah Owens
Secretary:	Walt Wilson
Treasurer:	Al Stoll

Board Members (two year terms):

Bonnie Stokes
Larry Moll
Jean Allender

Board Members (one year remaining)

Sherri Schackner
Betty Samson
Penny Watson
Karri Samson

Calendar of Events

May

- May 8th, 7:00 pm** Community Education Program: *A Screening of "Gold Rush"* at the Placer County Museum. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- May 18th, 6:00 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Business meeting at the Foresthill Divide Museum. Contact (530) 367-3535.
- May 18th, 7:00 pm** Rocklin Historical Society meeting at the Rocklin Library. Contact (916) 624-3464.
- May 20th, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact 916-652-7844.
- May 28th, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogy Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. Contact 530-885-2216.

June

- June 4th, 6:30 pm** Placer County Historical Society Dinner meeting at the Veteran's Memorial Hall. Cost is \$14 per person. Contact Betty Samson 530-885-5074.
- June 15th, 6:00 pm** Foresthill Divide Historical Society Potluck meeting at the Foresthill Memorial Hall. Contact 530-367-3535.
- June 17th, 6:30 pm** Loomis Basin Historical Society meeting at the Loomis Library. Contact 916-652-7844.
- June 17th, 6:30 pm** Historical Advisory Board meeting in the Bernhard Winery. Contact: 530-889-6500.
- June 25th, 7:00 pm** Placer County Genealogy Society general meeting in the Beecher Room at the Auburn Library. Contact 530-885-2216.
- June 27th, 12:00 pm** Community Education Program: *Jump into Summer ~ 19th Century Kids Games* at the Bernhard Museum. Contact: 530-889-6500.